

PROPHECY and the LORD'S RETURN

~ JAMES · M · GRAY ~

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Prophecy and the Lord's Return

By JAMES M. GRAY, D.D.

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Prophecy and the Lord's Return

*A COLLECTION OF POPULAR
ARTICLES AND ADDRESSES*

By

JAMES M. GRAY, D.D.

Dean of the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago



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Explanatory Note

“**H**AVE you anything in print on the subject of prophecy and the Lord’s return?” This question has been asked the author many times, especially during the progress of this awful war. And when he has answered, “Yes,” it has been necessary to name different books, periodicals or newspapers, to which he has contributed chapters or articles on the subject, most of which were not easily obtainable. Therefore to accommodate such inquirers, and to bring what he has written into a connected whole, he has gathered the different contributions together in this volume.

There has been some repetition in the various chapters necessarily, because of the different circumstances under which they were written, but care has been taken to reduce it to a minimum. A difference in style also will be noticed, which is explained by the fact that some of the chapters were written for the publications in which they were found, while others were addresses spoken offhand and stenographically reported.

In order to round out the treatment of the subject, it has been thought desirable to use, with a few changes, three chapters taken from the author’s

own books, "Satan and the Saint," "Great Epochs of Sacred History," and "Salvation from Start to Finish." For the other chapters acknowledgment is due to *The Christian Herald*, *Winona Echoes*, "Our God Shall Come" (Waters), and "Addresses on Prophecy" (*Watchword and Truth*).

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PART I
New Testament Themes

I

What is Meant by the Second Coming of Christ?

EVEN a cursory reading of the New Testament reveals that our Lord Jesus Christ is to come again to earth.

We remember His comforting words to His disciples on the night in which He was betrayed, recorded in John 14: "In my Father's house are many mansions; . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And His words spoken under very different circumstances the next day, when, adjured by the high priest, He affirmed: "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matt. 26:64).

His testimony is continued by the angels after His ascension, when, addressing the waiting disciples on Mount Olivet, they say: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Following the day of Pentecost, Peter renews the assurance to the surprised and excited multitude,

saying that He in whose name the lame man had been healed had been received into heaven "until the times of the restoration of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets" (Acts 3 : 21).

The apostle Paul is very full of the subject. He represents the Corinthian church as "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1 : 7). He tells the Philippians that "our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (3 : 20). The Thessalonians are taught that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4 : 16). Titus is directed to instruct his hearers that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts" they "should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2 : 12, 13).

John, James and Jude all refer to it in a similar way, the language of the first-named being very familiar : "Behold, he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him ; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1 : 7).

Indeed, Bible students have counted the times in which the second coming of Christ is alluded to in the New Testament in one form or another, and while there is a variation in their figures, yet the lowest is three hundred. This shows the impor-

tance attached to it by the divine Author of the Scriptures, and gives countenance to the statement that, with the exception of our redemption through the death of Christ, there is no doctrine of Christianity that receives greater emphasis.

II

But what does it mean? Strange that there should be a question about it where the language seems so simple and convincing! But question there is, and from time to time there have been those who have tried to spiritualize or allegorize it away.

1. Some have said that the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2) fulfilled the promises of Christ's second coming. But is this true? When you think of it, the condition on which the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost was the departure of Christ and not His return! Did He not say, "It is expedient for you that I *go away*; for if I *go not away*, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I *depart*, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7)? We thus see that the Holy Spirit is not the same Person as Christ. In the Godhead they are one, but as a manifestation of the Godhead to men Christ is another Person than He. His work supplements that of Christ and prepares for His coming reign, but it cannot be regarded as that reign itself. Indeed, Christ especially differentiates the coming of the Holy Spirit from His own coming, saying, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you *another* Comforter."

2. Some have said that the fall of Jerusalem under Titus, A. D. 70, is the event to which certain promises of the second advent refer. But Luke 21:20-28, which is predictive of that event, is opposed to such a thought. For example, it says, "When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." This was true indeed in Titus's time, but the second coming of Christ is associated uniformly not with the *desolation* but the *restoration* of Jerusalem. See, for illustration, Zechariah, chapters 12 to 14. Again, Luke says that after the desolation of Jerusalem by Titus the Jews will "be led away captive into all the nations," which was literally fulfilled. But Isaiah 14, having in mind evidently the second coming of Christ, says that in that day the Jews "shall take them captive whose captives they were, and they shall rule over their oppressors." Luke says that after the desolation of Jerusalem the city "shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," a parenthesis of time which has existed from that day until this. But he also adds that, when those "times of the Gentiles" are fulfilled, "then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Neither the period nor the description in this case fits the desolation of Jerusalem under Titus.

3. Others spiritualize the promises of Christ's second coming and resolve them into a spiritual coming only. But this is inconsistent with the

meaning of the words revealing that event, as will be noted later on. It also is inconsistent with the literal fulfillment of the predictions concerning His first coming. If that was personal and visible, why not this? Indeed, from the human conception which seems the less likely; that the Son of God should come as a helpless infant, cradled in a manger, or as the Lord of Glory, riding upon the clouds of heaven? And finally, it is inconsistent with the facts of His spiritual presence with His Church to-day, for even now, where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20; 28:20). As a matter of fact His spiritual presence never can be absent from His Church, for He is God, and His Spirit dwells within us to make His presence real. All these circumstances show, as another has expressed it, "that something more is in store for us than the spiritual influences of our absent Lord."

4. A fourth class of objectors think that the progress of the Gospel and the Church is the concrete fact in which the promises of Christ's coming combine. However, this cannot be, for the reason that, with a single exception, the two are always distinguished in the New Testament. The Church is to use the sacramental symbols "till he come" (1 Cor. 11). His servants are to "occupy," to trade with the goods of the nobleman until He returns (Luke 19). We are to wait for Him, and to join in the prayer of the Apocalypse, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly" (Rev. 22). The single exception is

1 Corinthians 12 : 12, 13, the object of which is not to teach that Christ and His Church are the same, but to identify the latter with the former as the body of which He is the Head.

5. Finally, the death of the believer is sometimes identified with the second coming of Christ; but this, as has been truly said, is the most extravagant of the errors. Death is an enemy, though a conquered one; while the coming of Christ is a "blessed hope" (1 Cor. 15 : 55; Titus 2 : 13). Death means dissolution and decay, while the second coming of Christ means resurrection and glory (Phil. 3 : 20, 21). At death the believer goes to be with Christ, while at the second advent Christ comes to the believer (Phil. 1 : 23; John 14 : 3; 21 : 21-23).

III

The above argument is approximately an abridgment of that by the late Dr. Stephen H. Tyng in "Premillennial Essays," a valuable work long out of print and difficult to obtain. But he has another argument, supplemental thereto, of almost equal value and interest. It is that found in the etymology of the Greek words, the nouns, pronouns and adverbs describing the event.

1. Take the word *Apocalypsis*, occurring nineteen times in the New Testament, and translated, "coming," "revelation," "appearing," and "manifestation" (1 Cor. 1 : 7; 2 Thess. 1 : 7; 1 Peter 1 : 7; 4 : 13). Wherever it is used with reference to what can be recognized by sight, it requires visi-

bility as a necessary quality. As Tyng says, it is sometimes used for the revealing of spiritual truth concerning Christ to the mind, which is not recognized by physical sight; but it is never used for the spiritual revelation of Christ Himself. In other words, there is no such thing as the spiritual revelation of Christ as distinguished from the revelation of the truth concerning Him.

2. *Epiphaneia* is another of these words. This and the verb derived from it occur in ten passages, and mean "the appearance of a thing corporeal and resplendent." Eight out of the ten passages refer to the second coming of Christ. (Compare, for example, 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13.)

3. *Parousia* is a commoner word, occurring twenty-four times, and translated sometimes "coming," and sometimes "presence." It means literally, "the becoming present," or, as our author says, it marks "the moment when absence ceases and presence begins." (Compare Matt. 24:3, 27; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; James 5:8.) In still other places it describes the coming of individuals like Stephanos, Titus and Paul himself (1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6; Phil. 1:26). If their coming were personal and visible, the inference is strong that it will be the same in the case of Christ.

4. Passing from the nouns to the pronouns and adverbs, consider Acts 1:11, already quoted: "This same Jesus . . . shall *so* come in like manner as ye have seen him go." Or 1 Thessalonians 4:16, "The Lord *himself* shall descend

from heaven with a shout." Or Hebrews 9:28, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the *second* time." "Here is an antithesis between 'once' and the 'second time,' and the resemblance between the two is personality."

IV

If space permitted, still another line of argument that the second coming of Christ is personal and visible could be found in the offices and actions connected with the Second Advent.

1. For instance, a great event connected with it is the translation of the Church "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). The Greek word "to meet" has the uniform meaning of a personal encounter. On the other hand, if the resurrection or translation of our bodies will be personal and visible, it is difficult to believe that the same will not be true of Him into whose likeness we are then to be transformed.

2. Another event is that of judgment. God "hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance . . . in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31). "That man" is a personal designation, and if His resurrection was visible, His second advent for judgment would seem to be the same.

3. Again, Christ warns His disciples against the false Christs who shall appear prior to His coming.

“Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert ; go not forth ; behold, he is in the secret chambers ; believe it not” (Matt. 24 : 26). These Antichrists are personal and visible, and the same seems to be true in the case of Him with whom they are contrasted. So we may say that for these reasons and many more “we look for our King clothed in glorified flesh.”

One of his parishioners complained to Dean Stanley that there was no suitable hymn for Ascension day, and that his children were eagerly asking what had been the feelings of the disciples after that event.

In response the dean wrote a beautiful hymn, the manuscript of which he gave to his American friend Dr. Philip Schaff, and from which, as a fitting conclusion to this chapter, we quote the simple but affecting lines that begin the last and the next to the last stanzas :

“He is gone ; but we once more
Shall behold Him as before ; ”

* * * * *

“He is gone ; but not in vain—
Wait until He comes again ! ”

II

When, and Why Christ Will Come a Second Time, or the Earthly Events Associated With His Coming

IN the previous chapter it was shown from the Scriptures that our Lord Jesus Christ is to return again to the earth personally and visibly. The plain declarations of Scripture, the meaning of particular words descriptive of the event, and an understanding of the collateral events associated with His coming, all combine to demonstrate that fact.

But nothing was said as to the probable *time* of His coming. Every reader of the New Testament is aware of the caution necessary to be observed here, for the times and the seasons "the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). As Archbishop Trench happily expressed it: "It is a necessary element of the doctrine of the second coming of Christ that it should be possible at any time, that none should consider it improbable in theirs."

For a quarter of a century the author of this book has made as careful a study of the prophetic Scriptures as he is capable of doing, but he knows of no event necessary to intervene before the Lord's

second advent. In consequence he is looking for Him every day, and seeking divine grace that when He shall appear he may have confidence, "and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

But there are certain events associated with His coming that are quite clearly revealed. The first is the translation of the Church, to which Paul specifically refers in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. He was comforting that people in the earthly loss of some of their number, for whom they were deeply sorrowing. Their sorrow was not because they doubted the fact of the resurrection of a future life, but because they felt that the living saints at the time of Christ's return would have some advantage over those who had died.

To reassure them he says, "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede them which are asleep"; for when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven," "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

It will be the experience of Enoch and that of Elijah repeated again in the case of the whole company of the elect; and from the earthly side it constitutes the great hope of the Church or the body of Christ in all the centuries. Compare Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; 2 Kings 2:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

II

A second event of great importance relates to the future of the Jews on earth. Indeed, taking the Old and New Testaments together, the greater part of the predictions concerning the second advent relates to that people and their earthly affairs. This is not because they are so worthy or important in themselves, but because of God's purposes in them for the blessing of the world.

These purposes, to be set forth more at length in another chapter, were, that Israel might be a repository for God's revealed truth in the world, a channel for the incoming of the personal Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and a national witness to Himself before the other nations, in order to their conversion and subjection to His Son.

The first two of these purposes Israel has fulfilled, but in the third she has failed. This failure is the cause of the disturbance and unhappiness in the Gentile nations to-day, as well as the explanation of Israel's dispersion and suffering among them.

But God will not have it so forever, and His word shall not return unto Him void (Isa. 55:11). The prophets, from Moses to John, are a unit in proclaiming the final return of the Jews to their own land (Deut. 30:1-10; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 9; Isa. 2:1-5; Jer. 32:36-44; Dan. 2:44; Amos 9:11-15; Zech. 12:9, 10; Matt. 24:15-28; Acts 15:14-17; Rom. 11:25-29; Rev. 7:4-8). At first they will return there in an unconverted state, so far as the acceptance of Jesus as their Messiah is

concerned ; and they will rebuild their temple and renew the worship of God somewhat after the manner of their fathers. But this will prove to be the hour of "Jacob's trouble," such as that people have never before known ; and yet "for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24 : 22). Those days shall be shortened, because the Lord—who already shall have come to the air, as the author understands the Scriptures, and unto whom the Church, which is His body, shall have been caught up—shall now come with His saints, "and his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives" (Zech. 14 : 4).

The second coming of Christ, in other words, is not only an event, but marks a period of certain stages, or may be likened to a drama with several scenes.

For example, a period will elapse between the translation of the Church to meet the Lord in the air, and the coming of the Lord with His saints to the earth. How long a period is not revealed ; but if this interpretation be correct, it will be sufficient for the reëstablishment of Israel in Palestine, and the development of those movements leading up to the third great event associated with the second coming.

III

This event is the judgment on the Gentile nations, culminating in the battle of Armageddon. The Gentile nations meant are those of Christendom,

and chiefly those that encircle and may be said to control the Mediterranean Sea. How far others, including our own nation on the one hand, or the heathen nations of Asia and Africa on the other, may be involved in the crisis, is not revealed. That may depend upon international alliances or affiliations yet to come.

But why these judgments on the Gentile nations? For answer, one might recur to the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11), since from that time of the first attempt at a world-monarchy, the nations never have served God. But a more convenient starting-point is about 600 B. C., when Israel, because of her disobedience, was temporarily rejected as God's servant on the earth, and a divine transfer of dominion made to the kingdom of Babylon and her successors (2 Kings, chapters 24 and 25; Jer. 27; Dan. 2). The "times of the Gentiles" began then. The kingdom of Babylon was succeeded by that of the Medes and Persians, and that by the kingdom of Greece, and that by the Roman Empire, which, as Tregelles says, "still bears sway, though in a divided condition."

This last-named empire, roughly speaking, stretches from the Euphrates to the Irish Sea, and includes a part of Turkey and Palestine on the east; Africa and Egypt on the south; Greece, the Balkans and part of Austria-Hungary on the north; Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Great Britain on the west. It will be brought together again, according to the prophets, and again go up under

one head against the sacred city of Jerusalem. Twice before has that city been besieged by the Gentile powers (under Nebuchadnezzar, B. C. 600, and under Titus A. D. 70), and on each occasion has she been overcome, and on the last, "trodden down of the Gentiles" until now (Luke 21:24). But in the crisis to come the tables will be turned; for "then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle" (Zech. 14:3).

Such is the battle of Armageddon, foretold in Revelation 16:12-16, and described in Revelation 19:11-21. At this time we do not enlarge upon its immediate causes, the personnel of its army, the rise of its commander-in-chief, figuratively spoken of in Scripture as the "Beast," or the results that will follow it. But this can be said: that it is the great earthly event of which so much is spoken in the Bible. Besides the Scriptures already indicated, see Psalms 2:10; 45; 46; 47; 50; 68; 110; Isaiah 10:20-34; 11; 24; 63:1-6; Daniel 7:9-14; Joel 3; Matthew 24:15-30; Acts 17:30, 31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14, 15, and other places. It is the great event for which the world waits without knowing it. As Gaebelein says, it is a great climax of Revelation. It is God's vindication of His Son. "The New Theology has been speaking about 'the vanishing Christ,' by which is meant the denial of His deity, His virgin birth, His sacrificial death, and His physical resurrection. But at the very moment when apostate Christendom

will be rejoicing that the Christ of the Bible has altogether vanished, He will return as the vanquisher of His enemies and the vindicator of His truth."

"The armies which are in heaven follow him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (19:14). These are not angels, but saints. The former accompany Him (2 Thess. 1:7-10), but as the reapers in the judgment and the gatherers of Israel (Matt. 13:39; 24:31). The saints accompany Him to reign (1 Cor. 6:2; Col. 3:4).

It remains to say a word about the place. "Armageddon" identifies a mountain rising from the plain of Esdraelon, or the valley of Jezreel, where many a battle has been fought in the history of Israel. Indeed, to quote another, "it has been a chosen place for encampment in every contest, from the days of Nebuchadnezzar to the distant march of Napoleon into Syria. Jews, Gentiles, Saracens, Crusaders, Egyptians, Turks, Arabs, and warriors of every nation under heaven have pitched their tents there, and have beheld their banners wet with the dews of Tabor and Hermon." It is important to note that no point in Russia, Austria, the Balkans, Germany, France, Italy or Great Britain answers to Armageddon, or can be substituted for it. Of course, the developments of the present war might shift the scene of battle from the European continent to that of Asia, and create an entirely different situation from the present; but we are now considering only the situation as it is.

However, not only must there be a shifting of

the scene of battle before the present conflict could be identified with Armageddon, but there must be also a new alignment of the nations. The Triple Entente is composed of Russia, Great Britain and France ; but since Russia was not part of the Roman Empire, it would seem that sooner or later she must withdraw from the other two. The Triple Alliance is, or was, composed of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy ; but Germany was not part of the Roman Empire ; hence, for the same reason, she must withdraw from the other two. The whole of Austria-Hungary was not in the Roman Empire ; hence are we to look for a division there ? Ireland was not in the Roman Empire—does that mean eventually home rule ?

A student of prophecy must not be a prophet ; hence discretion restrains any forecasting of our own ; but things are just now happening on the continent of Europe that might speedily bring about such a realignment of the nations, and in that sense make a situation which would soon mean Armageddon.

Nevertheless we, who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, are looking, not for Armageddon, but for Him, “when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day ” (2 Thess. 1 : 10).

III

The Translation of the Church—An Exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4 : 13-18

THE theme of this chapter, which was briefly referred to in the preceding one, furnishes one of the most comforting passages in the New Testament. Paul begins to treat of it at about the thirteenth verse. He was the founder of the church at Thessalonica, and when there had laid great emphasis upon the second coming of Christ in His glory, and upon the fact that they who were Christ's would be partakers of that glory when He came.

He was expecting the second coming of Christ in his day. Shall we say that because He did *not* come therefore his words referring thereto are not inspired? Certainly not. The inspiration of Scripture terminates not on the thoughts of the writers, but on the words. Paul was not inspired as to what he thought on subjects day after day, but as to what he wrote as holy Scripture.

Paul, reading the words of the Old Testament prophets, and judging by revelations he personally may have received, was led to believe that Christ might come in his day. And the true Church in all the centuries has been in the same attitude with

reference to Christ's coming, expecting Him any day. It seems to be the purpose of God to keep each generation of Christians in this attitude of expectancy as a stimulant to their hope.

These at Thessalonica, then, were expecting Christ to come in their day. But Paul had left them now, and as weeks and months had elapsed some of their number had died, and those who were left behind were sorrowing, not because they feared that their dead were lost, not because they questioned the immortality of the soul, or even the resurrection of the body, but because they thought that they who would be alive and remaining on the earth when the Lord came would have some advantage over the dead in entering upon the glory.

Paul is writing this part of his letter to correct that impression, saying: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope." How comforting! He does not say we may not sorrow. What a solace there is in sorrow! We may sorrow, but not "as others which have no hope," not as the men and women of the world sorrow when their loved ones are taken away.

And what is the reason we may not so sorrow? It is that "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Let us not be misled by the word "sleep" as though the condition of the sainted dead were one

Is the language of inspiration misleading

of unconsciousness. No such gloomy and comfortless teaching is set before us in the Word of God. Its teaching is that our beloved when they pass hence in Jesus are in conscious felicity and peace with Him. They are absent from the body, but present with the Lord, as Paul says, by which he never meant that they had departed into a state of unconsciousness. Even from the psychological point of view such a theory is to be discarded, for when we are asleep we are often more active than when awake. We then can take a journey across a continent and back without trouble or weariness.

"Them that sleep in Jesus" are those who have passed hence in the faith, and are with Him where He is, but God will bring them with Him when Jesus comes. David, in the Old Testament, was mourning over the death of his child and said, "I will go to him, but he will not return to me." That was as much as David knew, as much as was revealed, in that day, but when we come into the New Testament we cannot say that because we do not know that it is true. I dare not say of my righteous dead, "they will not return to me," for they may return to me with Jesus before I go to them.

"For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord that we which are alive and remain shall not precede them which are asleep." There is no uncertainty here. "*By the Word of the Lord*," means no word which the Lord spake when He was here on earth in the flesh, but some particular word

which had been given to Paul himself concerning this matter.

Instead, then, of the living preceding them which are asleep, the opposite will be the case, for he adds: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Notice the intensive pronoun: "The Lord *Himself*." Not His Spirit, not His Church, not the conversion of a sinner, not the death of a saint, but "*Himself*." As those two men in white apparel said to the waiting disciples on the Mount of Olives, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which was taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Can language be more explicit? "*This same Jesus!*" Did He go up in a body? Then He will come down in a body. Did He go up in the clouds? Then will He come down in the clouds. Did they see Him as He went up? Then shall they see Him as He comes down.

This is the first scene in the coming drama, the resurrection of the dead saints, the reuniting of their bodies to their souls and the glorification of those bodies like unto the body of our Lord Himself.

II

But witness the next scene. "Then we which are alive and remain (*i. e.*, here on earth in the

flesh) shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." Think of this a moment. There is a passage in Hebrews like this: "It is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment," and sometimes it is quoted as though it read: "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die and after this the judgment." But it does not so read. It is not appointed unto *all* men once to die. There is one generation of men who, believing on the Lord Jesus Christ and washed in His blood, shall be alive and remaining here when He comes, and they "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air."

This is not the only place where that is taught. We read in the fifteenth of First Corinthians that "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." What does this mean? Does it not teach that "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" in one of two ways, either by death or by translation?

There are those who, astonished at this, say it is too utterly out of the natural order to believe. Had they been alive before creation, they might have said it was too utterly out of the natural order to have a Garden of Eden, and a man and a woman in it. *Is this* such an unusual thing, that

the Church should be caught up "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air"? Twice in history has God given an illustration, or type, of what He means by it, once in the antediluvian and once in the Mosaic age.

Take Enoch who "walked with God, and he was not, for God took him." What is the meaning of that expression? It is given in Hebrews where we are told he was "translated, having never seen death." Take Elijah. He walked one day with Elisha across the Jordan on dry land, and when their feet touched the other side, the chariot of God came down and he was caught up by a whirlwind into heaven. Translated, having never seen death. What God is able to do with one man is He not able to do with a million?

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." I speak for the moment to gospel ministers: How often are we called to the bedside of the dying and to the open grave! Our mission there is to be one of comfort. Who is so well able to instruct us as to the comfort on such an occasion as "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort"? And He says, "Comfort one another with these words."

Sometimes the question is asked as to the practical utility of this truth. Why should we believe and preach it? In what sense can it be called a working doctrine in the pulpit? For answer, carefully read this First Epistle to the Thessalonians and notice at the close of every chapter a reference

to this blessed hope. Paul, preaching to a heathen people who had never heard of the true God, or of Jesus Christ, until he went among them, used this hope as a motive for salvation, for service, for sanctification, and, as we have just seen, for solace and comfort in the darkest hours of human experience. This is the practical utility of this truth. May God awaken us to a realization of it, for it will cause the Bible to become to us a new book.

With Him in Glory ! O wonderful word !
Eye hath not seen and ear hath not heard,
Mind hath not fathomed the future in store,
Preserved for the children of God evermore.

Suffering over, and failure and sin,
Like Him without and like Him within,
Bodies made perfect, and spirits set free,
We will share in His Glory whose Glory we see.

With Him in Glory ! Beholding His face !
With Him in Glory ! O marvellous Grace !
Happy, and holy, and reigning in bliss,
Can there be anything greater than this ?

IV

The Second Coming of Christ a Motive for Holiness

WHAT is the present and practical utility of the hope of the coming of the Lord? Why should it be proposed as a special theme of Biblical inquiry or emphasized as a working doctrine in the Christian pulpit? How does it affect the spiritual life of believers? What influence does it exercise in the production of right living and in the furtherance of the process of sanctification? The answer to this inquiry will be drawn first, from the standpoint of experience and history, secondly, from that of the Scriptures and thirdly, from that of the philosophy or the nature of the case.

I

Referring to experience and history, I recall the remark of a pastor who, in referring to worldly-minded church members, said that he had never known a believer in the Lord's coming to be a frequenter of the theatre. I cannot say with what exactness he desired the remark to be understood, but I began an examination of my own flock from that point of view. Of course it is not difficult to

find illustrations of a principle like this when your heart is set on finding them, and the results of my examination will be taken with that allowance, and yet so far as recollection served me in the review of a pastorate of fifteen years in one parish, my testimony agreed with the remark. The members of my church, on whose hearts the coming of Christ had made any sensible impression, were separated from that whole system of worldliness of which theatre going is only a single symptom. They were the working force of my church along spiritual lines, and the most intelligent Bible students. They manifested the greatest power in prayer, they were the most self-denying givers, they lived the most even and consistent lives, they were the most interested in home and foreign missions, and more than others they opened their hearts to the deeper truths concerning the Holy Spirit with the results certain to follow in such a case. I would not insinuate that all these graces were always absent from those who did not possess this Hope, neither that all who *professed* the Hope were examples of these graces, but in general terms, my testimony is true.

From the examination of my flock I began that of my own life, and I refer to it not to exploit any peculiar experience of personal holiness, as though I had something different from my brethren, but only as in the other case to bear testimony to fact. There are some things about myself that I know, and of which I speak to the glory of God's grace.

I know I am a different man to-day from what I was prior to my conversion to Jesus Christ, and I attribute the change to that conversion; and I know I am a different Christian to-day from what I was when the doctrine of our Lord's coming began to take hold of my consciousness, and I attribute the latter change to that fact.

There are at least five things which this hope effected in my life, and as to the value and relation of them in the production of personal holiness the reader may judge—it awakened a real love and enthusiasm for the study of every part of God's word; it quickened my zeal in Christian service, especially in foreign missions; it delivered my mind from an overweening ambition for worldly success and the praise of men; it developed patience and quietness in the face of unjust treatment; and finally it broke the bands of covetousness and set me free to give of my substance to the Lord.

But following the examination of my own life, I undertook that of others who were conspicuous and able exponents of this doctrine, Krummacher of Germany, the Bonars of Scotland, Spurgeon and Müller of England, Andrew Murray of South Africa, J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission, A. J. Gordon of Boston, and others who were men possessing extraordinary spiritual gifts, living holy lives, conducting their churches or other Christian enterprises on spiritual lines, and looked up to as leaders in God's service. What made these men what they were? Is it assuming

to connect the spiritual experiences they enjoyed, or the spiritual fruits they produced, with their belief in the coming of the Lord? No one familiar with their utterances on this theme or who knew any of them personally, will affirm this.

But we have nobler witness still in the inspired apostles and writers of the New Testament. It will appear later how large a place in their horizon was occupied with the hope of the return of our Lord. Dr. Hackett is none too strong when he affirms that it filled their circle of view, that it was the great consummation on which their strongest hopes were fixed, that they lived in expectation of it and laboured to be prepared for it. But what kind of men, what kind of *Christians* did it make of Paul, and James, and Peter, and John and Jude? Let any reader of the New Testament answer this question for himself.

And finally, from the writers of the New Testament we may turn to the churches to which their epistles were addressed. They were not perfect churches, and they had to be rebuked, but yet they are the ideals constantly set before the churches of our own day. What gives them such a character? Not to anticipate the argument from Scripture, let us hear the testimony of the historian of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Edward Gibbon does not write as a friend of Christianity. In the language of Milman, the best editor of his works, his imagination is dead to its moral dignity, and he seeks to keep it down by a general tone of

jealous disparagement, or to neutralize it by a painfully elaborate exposition of its darker and degenerate periods. For this reason, therefore, there is a peculiar value in his declaration that in the ancient Church the influence of truth was greatly strengthened by the universal belief that the kingdom of heaven was at hand and that it produced the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of the Christians.

II

Let us now turn to the Word of God. The matter lies in my thought like this : What are the elements of holiness in the Christian, and what method do our Lord and His inspired apostles employ to produce them ?

To take a single illustration from the Gospels, is crucifixion of self an element of holiness in a Christian ? If it will not be denied that it is, then let me call attention to the fact that our Lord seeks to inculcate this grace in His disciples by the hope of His second coming, saying (Matt. 16 : 25-27) : "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. . . . For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels ; and then shall he reward every man according to his works."

The context of these words adds to their significance. Peter had just confessed Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of the living God, and following that

confession our Lord, for the first time, announced His approaching sufferings and death at Jerusalem. They are astounded at the information. Peter especially is nonplussed. The disappointment is almost unbearable. There must be some mistake, and the impetuous disciple takes our Lord aside to expostulate with Him concerning it. Remember that Peter's solicitude is for himself—for what he shall lose, quite as much as it is for Jesus—for what he shall suffer. Like all the disciples at this period, his motives and desires are selfish and worldly to a great extent. If Jesus were Messiah then would He soon seize the reins of government and sit upon the throne of His father David. Who would be nearest to Him in His triumph save those who had shared that place in His obscurity? Were these expectations to be destroyed? Was He not the One to redeem Israel? Had they left all to follow Him for naught?

I know not which impresses me the more in Jesus' treatment of His disciples at this crisis, the hope He still holds out to them, or the tenderness and consideration with which He stoops to their weakness in indicating the way in which it must be obtained.

He does not discourage them. He does not rebuke them for having such a hope. *He does not contradict their expectations*, this especially is to be emphasized. He does not say "your desires, and ambitions and anticipations are all sinful and radically wrong." He says rather "they will all come

to pass, only somewhat later in time, and by a different process than that which you expect.” “If any man will come after me, *let him deny himself, and take up his cross*, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. . . . For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his father with his angels ; *and then* (not now) he shall reward every man according to his works.”

Could the relation of this hope to the holiness of the believer be stated in clearer terms ? Were not the disciples to have what they expected, and far more, indeed ? And were not their expectations to be realized only when their Lord should come again, not before, but certainly then ? And were they not to enter upon a process of self-crucifixion in view of their attainment ?

Nor is this all. Some six days after this instruction our Lord taketh Peter, James and John, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and is transfigured before them. He condescends to give them a foretaste of the coming glory ; He strengthens their conviction as to the truth of what He promised by a first installment of its fulfillment ; and so satisfied is even Peter, so refined and purified are the desires and ambitions of his heart already, that he is willing to remain upon Mount Tabor, and forego anything he had in mind concerning Zion.

Behold what the hope has done for him ! It was the turning point in his career ; it was the most im-

pressive lesson, with a single exception, that he ever learned in his earthly fellowship with Jesus. When the apostle is an old man, and, in the near expectancy of putting off his tabernacle, would say his final word to those who had obtained like precious faith with him, it is to recall this scene, and say: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, but were eye witnesses of his majesty. . . . When we were with him in the holy mount."

III

But let us not lose sight of the point in view, viz.: What are the elements of holiness in a Christian and by what means do our Lord and His inspired apostles seek to awaken them? There can be no doubt that the subduing of the grosser fleshly appetites is such an element; but Paul, in writing to the Colossians, insists upon that duty in the light of the second coming, saying: "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory; therefore mortify your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry" (Col. 3 : 4, 5). See also Titus 2 : 11-13.

There can be no question that refrainment from hasty and uncharitable judgment is such an element, but Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, for he will bring to light the hidden things of dark-

ness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts " (1 Cor. 4 : 5).

Fidelity in service is such an element, but that which spurred the apostle in its exercise was the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, would give him at that day, and not to him only, " but also to all them that love his appearing " (2 Tim. 4 : 8).

It will not be questioned that brotherly love is such an element, and Paul declares as much when he prays for the Thessalonians that they may " increase and abound in love one towards another, to the end that God may establish their hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints " (1 Thess. 3 : 12, 13).

Here are only five epistles out of thirteen, and only a single reference from each, and yet in every instance a different Christian virtue is alluded to and its propagation urged with reference to that one event, the coming of the Lord.

But let us examine the contents of the general epistles. Peter is especially rich in his allusions to this blessed hope. It is the key-note of both of his epistles, and every allusion he makes to that doctrine is connected with and used to emphasize the duty of personal holiness.

You recall the opening of the first epistle, where he blesses God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who " hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, . . . to an inheritance, incorruptible and

undefiled, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." But when is the last time? He explains it to be that of the appearing of Jesus Christ. It is at His coming and when His glory shall be revealed, that we are to receive the consummation of our faith, that is, the full and complete "salvation of our souls."

But now, as based upon and growing out of this hope, the "strangers" whom he addressed are exhorted not only to gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace thus to be brought to them at the appearing of Jesus Christ, but especially to be *holy*, as their Father in heaven is holy; to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies and evil speakings; to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles; and to submit themselves to every ordinance of man. Servants are besought on this account to be subject to their masters, and wives to their husbands. Husbands are called upon for the same reason to give honour to their wives, and all indeed to be compassionate one of another, loving, pitiful and courteous. A special appeal is made to ministers, the elders of the flock, to feed the same "not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind, not as lords over God's heritage but ensamples to the flock," that "*when the Chief Shepherd shall appear*" they may "receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

The second epistle is of the same character as the first. There the subject of false teachers and their false teaching is treated of, but it is evident from the third chapter that the latter concerned the promise of the Lord's coming. Time was passing, and all things were continuing as they had been from the beginning, so that it appeared to some as if He would never come. But they are reminded of the scoffers in the days of Noah, and they are taught that God does not count time as men count it; and then with a final asseveration that He will come as a thief in the night, the apostle climaxes by saying, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God?"

IV

The other general epistles are equally as plain in their teachings on this subject, but with an illustration or two from the book of Revelation, we must leave the argument from Scripture to refer briefly to that from the philosophy or the nature of the case.

Revelation 2 : 25 reads, "that which ye have hold fast till I come." In other words, the Lord's coming is a motive for steadfastness. Revelation 3 : 3 employs it in like manner to provoke unto repentance and watchfulness against sin; while chapter 16 : 15 contains in connection with it at once one of the most precious promises and also solemn warnings in Holy Writ: "Behold I come as a thief.

Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame."

We have thus seen that there is a practical relationship between this blessed hope and the personal holiness of the one who truly entertains it. But it remains to ask, How do we account for it? For example, the apostle John says: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. *And every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he (Christ) is pure*" (3: 2, 3).

The question is, Why does He do this? It may be said that He does this because He is a son of God. Holiness is His already in the germ, and by a law of development it must continue to progress towards maturity. But this does not fully meet the case, since such a reason is as applicable to other doctrines as that of our Lord's coming, and yet the latter, so particularly associated with the production of holiness, would seem to demand a particular reason to account for it.

What if we say that such a reason is found in its tangibility and imminence? In its appeal to our senses, to something which we can readily understand, as well as to the possibility of its realization at any time? The hope of heaven is a blessed hope indeed, but it is vague and indefinite in comparison with this. It is difficult, if not impossible for the Christian to conceive of heaven—of its

whereabouts or the manner of its life. In speaking of its felicity and reward the idea of rest occupies the foreground ; but rest is a negative blessing and lacks the impulse for overcoming sin and producing holiness.

Moreover there are Christians who, however we may disagree with them, believe in the unconsciousness of the soul after death and until the resurrection ; while among those who oppose that there are many who cannot satisfy themselves that the believer at death goes immediately to be with Christ.

And then, even if these theories are set aside, as I believe they ought to be, it remains that Christians die and go to heaven without their bodies, and there can be no complete felicity or reward until these are raised and glorified like unto Christ's glorious body. This last thought, indeed, seems necessary also to any conviction of the recognition and reunion of friends in the world to come, which has so much to do with the happiness of its anticipation.

But now compare with this common hope of heaven the hope of our Lord's return. How much there is in its imagery to give form and substance to it ! His personal and visible appearing in the clouds, the raising of the bodies of the saints, the rapture of the Church, the sitting upon thrones and judging, the regathering of Israel, the millennial glory upon the earth !

How strongly calculated is all this to enkindle hope, to arouse ambition, and to aid in a correct

estimate of the things of the present time in contrast with those that are to come; so that these lose their power to conform us to their mould as those increase in the opposite direction.

And if it be said that, after all, this is only imagery and nothing more; if it be said that the teaching it represents is to be figuratively interpreted, it matters not. The argument is not affected by that hypothesis. It were easy to refute such an objection, but we are under no necessity so to do.

This hope may at the end prove to have been altogether fanciful and delusive, if such a conception be possible, and yet it remains that it has been, and is, the greatest incentive to personal holiness.

For this reason I commend it to the Christian ministry as a working doctrine of the pulpit, and to every disciple of Jesus Christ as a spiritual lever by which, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, he will be lifted to a higher plane of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord."

V

The Second Coming of Christ and Christian Service—An Exposition of 2 Corinthians 5:1-10

“**F**OR we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (1-4).

Here is something we *know*. It is no surmise, nor probability, nor uncertainty. If we are looking for positive teaching and definite facts in this age of doubt, here is an affirmation to tie to. And how many such there are after all, and concerning the most vital affairs of men, if only we are willing to take God’s word for them!

And this is what we know—“That if our earthly house of this tabernacle,” by which is meant our bodily frame, “were dissolved, we have a building

of God," *i. e.*, a resurrection body, "an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

"*If*" it be dissolved. It may not be so necessarily. As was remarked in an earlier chapter, there is a passage in Hebrews which says: "It is appointed unto men once to die." But it is not so appointed unto *all* men, and *absolutely*. There is one generation of men who shall never see death, and that is those, who, being alive in the flesh and remaining on this earth till Jesus comes, and believing on Him, "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet him in the air" (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). "We shall not all sleep," said Paul to this same church of Corinth in his earlier epistle (15:51), "but we shall all be changed." This change may take place in one of two ways, by death or by translation, and for many it will be the latter and not the former way.

Now the early Christians were expecting the return of the Lord in their own day. They were not looking for death, and for dissolution in that sense, but for His coming. Nevertheless, Paul says, if we should be disappointed in this hope, if the Lord should tarry longer than we expect, and our bodies should be dissolved by death, still it remains true that we have a resurrection body awaiting us, "a building of God, an house not made with hands."

Notice the contrast between "tabernacle" and "building." Perhaps the inspired writer had in mind the tabernacle in the wilderness where Israel

worshipped God, and the temple of Solomon's erection afterwards in Jerusalem. The first was just a temporary affair, a tent that could be taken down and moved anywhere at short notice. But the temple was intended to be permanent. So our present bodies are merely tents for a fleeting moment, but the bodies that are to be are "eternal," and their location is "in the heavens."

"Forever with the Lord,
Amen, so let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality."

In these bodies "we groan," the apostle says. Ah! there is so much to make us groan, the ills that flesh is heir to, the burdens and perplexities of the mind, the sorrows and bereavements of the heart. But the special object for which the intelligent Christian groans is "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23); or as the text expresses it, that we may be "clothed upon with our house which is from heaven," that we may receive our resurrection body. It is then that we are delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty (or the glory of the liberty) of the children of God."

Keep in mind that it is not *death* for which the Christian groans, but the resurrection from the dead. Death is a "naked" and "unclothed"—a disembodied state, but resurrection is just the

opposite. In resurrection we are "clothed upon," and "mortality is swallowed up of life." This is the significance of the words: "If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked." There is no doubt that we shall be clothed, the apostle says: the reception of the resurrection body is a certainty; but what we desire is that we may not receive it after we have passed into the naked or disembodied state, but even now while we are alive in this state and occupying our present bodily frame!

The fourth verse of the text is very beautiful. We give Murdock's translation from the Syriac:

"For while we are here in this house we groan under its burden; yet ye desire not to throw it off, but to be clothed over it, so that its mortality may be absorbed in life."

At death the Christian "throws off" this body, but at the translation when the Lord comes, he does not throw it off, but the resurrection body clothes him "over it"; that which is mortal, "in a moment, in the twinkling of the eye" becomes "absorbed" in that which is immortal.

Therefore the hope of the Christian is the coming of Christ. It is for *Him* he is looking, who when He comes shall change these bodies of our humiliation "like unto his own glorious body, according to the mighty working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:21, R. V.). This is the motive that stirs the Christian to that aim or ambition of which, a little later, the apostle speaks.

II

Let us look at the assurance of this hope, or the strengthening of the motive:

“Now he that hath wrought us for this selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight :) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (5-8).

“Now he that wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.” A more terse, complete and satisfying statement of the Christian’s ground of hope than this could scarcely be expressed. It were as though the apostle said: “The very object God had in view in your redemption and regeneration through Christ was this, that you might be raised from the dead and glorified with him.” Shall God fail of His object? Is He likely to change His mind? If it were but a man’s purpose, would not he bend every energy and strain every nerve to carry it into execution, and shall we predicate less of God? Who can doubt that if this is the purpose for which God has planned His work of salvation in us, He will ultimately see it through?

But there is something even stronger than this, for God “hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is here meant, Who dwells in us as regenerated believers in Christ Jesus, and Who is God’s earnest or security; God’s pledge or

promise that this thing shall come to pass. Macbeth was hailed thane of Cawdor "for an earnest of a greater honour," and we have received the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as an earnest of the glory we shall have when we appear with Christ.

This helps us to understand what Paul means when he says: "Therefore we are always confident," or rather, "always of good courage." "We are now at home in the body," to paraphrase his words, "and absent from the Lord"; we are on earth rather than in heaven; we are walking by faith rather than by sight; nevertheless, we are of good courage. We are willing rather to be absent from the body. We are pleased were it the Lord's will to be even in the disembodied state, and present with Him; but whatever our present condition or experience in this respect may be, we are of good courage. We are of good courage in view of God's purpose concerning us as indicated in the earnest of His Spirit, that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, and that we shall be clothed upon therewith, and our "mortality swallowed up of life."

The *Bible Commentary* says that to be "with the Lord," *i. e.*, in the disembodied state, is distinguished here from the Lord's coming to take us to be with Him in soul and body both (1 Thess. 4:13-17), and adds this interesting comment: "Perhaps the disembodied spirits of believers have fullness of communion with Christ unseen; but not the mutual recognition of one another until

clothed with their visible bodies at the resurrection. It is then that with joy we shall recognize Christ's image in each other perfect."

III

We have now reached the apostle's aim :

"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men " (9-11).

"*Wherefore*," *i. e.*, because of our confidence concerning the resurrection of the body at Christ's coming and the glory that shall be ours, "we labour," *i. e.*, we make it our aim, as the Revised Version puts it ; we are ambitious, in other words, that whether present here in our body on the earth when He comes, or absent from the body and in the unclothed state, we may be accepted of Him, or well-pleasing in His sight.

The principle governing the lives of the great is always an interesting and profitable study. What governed Napoleon, or Bismarck, or Garibaldi? What was the secret of Tolstoi's life, what made Abraham Lincoln? How can you account for the success of Thomas A. Edison? What makes a great merchant like Marshall Field, or a financier like J. Pierpont Morgan?

But here is a man greater than any of them.

What statesman, warrior, philosopher, man of affairs can measure up to the apostle Paul in his influence upon human history? Has any greater man than he lived since Jesus Christ? Could all the great men of these nineteen centuries rolled into one be said to have affected their race for good in comparison with this consecrated missionary to the Gentiles? As Martin Luther said three hundred years ago, so can we still say: "His words are not dead words, they are living creatures with hands and feet," touching in myriads of hearts at this very hour the same chords of feeling which vibrated at their first utterance! The Lord Jesus Christ gave life to His Church, but the apostle Paul by His grace has given it its form.

Let the strong young men of this generation study this life. Let them concentrate their attention on the *best*. What governed Paul? What stimulated this giant in intellect and moral power? What was the secret of his enduring success? The goal of his ambition, the prize he sought, the aim towards which his energies were bent? Was it gold? Honour? Material power? Was it any gain of sense or time?

Paul was not a fool. He was a clear-headed, warm-hearted, far-sighted man. He had the highest education of his time. He had the greatest influence among his countrymen. He possessed the unusual privileges of a Roman citizen. His ancestry, surroundings, training, character, position, made him, at the zenith of his youth, the most en-

viable of his generation. But these things he counted loss for Christ, they were refuse in his sight in comparison with what the Lord of glory had to offer. He "endured as seeing Him who is invisible." He walked "by faith, not by sight." Jesus was coming again to bring His reward with Him, and the aim of this greatest and mightiest of men was to be accepted, to be well-pleasing in His sight. It was this that made him glory in his infirmities, in his troubles and his labours, his beatings and scourgings, his perils by the land and by the sea, his famine and his nakedness, and the daily care of all the churches. What a lesson for us to-day! What an example! What an inspiration!

If Paul's testimony may be taken, it were worth while to await the coming of Jesus Christ for His saints and the resurrection of the dead. It were worth while to be accepted and well-pleasing in His sight when He comes, for "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that then shall be revealed in us." This glory is so great that the whole creation, animate and inanimate, is groaning and travailing in pain together until now, awaiting it (Rom. 8:18-23).

IV

But there is a certain qualification to this thought of glory, for the apostle says:

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things

done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

There can be no objection to the most inclusive application of the word "all" for it is clear from other Scriptures that no soul can escape passing in judgment before the Son of God. But nevertheless we believe that Paul is here limiting it to Christians. The judgment seat of which he speaks is that which shall be set up when Jesus comes "a second time without sin unto salvation," and when the Church shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. It is the judgment seat before which Christians only shall appear. The context seems to demand this.

But the question arises as to why Christians should be judged, since the Scripture says: "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). The answer is that they are not judged as sinners but as saints. It is not a question of their salvation that is to be determined, but a question of their fidelity as disciples, in order to the adjudication of their rewards. The text parallels perfectly with such a parable as that of the talents or the pounds (Matt. 25; Luke 19). It is the return of the nobleman, having received his kingdom, who is now reckoning with his stewards before he punishes his enemies, and assigning to each the place in the kingdom he is to occupy.

Notice that we are to "receive the things done in the *body*," *i. e.*, by the instrumentality of the

body, which is "a proof of the essential identity of the natural and resurrection body." The *Bible Commentary* says: "Justice requires that substantially the same body which has been the instrument of the unbeliever's sins should be the object of punishment," but if this be true, the other side of the case is also true, and substantially the same body that rendered the acceptable service should receive the reward. These rewards will be received according to what we have done.

On this whole question of rewards there is much confusion in the Christian mind. To quote A. J. Gordon in "The Twofold Life": "If the Romanist has exalted merit to the utter exclusion of grace, the Protestant may be in danger of exalting grace to the utter exclusion of merit." Of course merit has nothing to do with our pardon and acceptance. As sinners standing before the mercy seat "there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but as saints standing before the judgment seat of Christ there *will* be a difference since they are to "be judged every man according to their works."

Rewards, therefore, have an important place in the scheme of redemption, and "it is not necessary, in order to magnify the grace of God, that, having reduced all men to the same level of unworthiness, we should fix them there forever." Otherwise what means the words of the prophet that they who turn many to righteousness "shall shine as the stars forever and ever"?

It is indeed because of these distinctions in disciples in the life to come that while God in one place says: "Look unto me, and be ye saved," He does in another say: "Look to *yourselves*, . . . that ye receive a full reward" (Isa. 45:22; 2 John 8, R. V.).

"Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." This was Paul's chief service for his Lord "to persuade men," to pray them "in Christ's stead" to be "reconciled to God." This, in the concrete, was his ambition and aim. And the motive stimulating thereto was, "the fear (not terror) of the Lord."

The Revised Version translates "terror" by "fear," and the reference is not to the fear of the ungodly in perdition, but the fear of the godly as he stands before the judgment seat of Christ. The fear of the ungodly were in itself a sufficient motive for seeking to save them from their sin, and Paul employs it at other times, but he does not employ it here. He is thinking of himself here, and the accounting he must render to the Lord of glory for the fidelity and diligence with which he has witnessed to His name.

Let the writer press the application of this upon his readers with the following incident:

When he was a young man he once heard the Rev. George J. Mingins, pastor-evangelist in the Presbyterian Church, relate this experience:

He had been an infidel in his youth and associated with infidel companions in Philadelphia.

Some time after his conversion he was visiting one of them, who said :

“ George, I hear you’re a Christian now ; is that so ? ”

“ It is,” said Mr. Mingins.

“ And, George, do you believe in God ? ”

“ I do.”

“ And do you believe in hell, and that all who do not believe in God and in Jesus Christ will ultimately go to hell ? ”

“ I do, most solemnly.”

“ Well, George,” said he, “ does Christianity dry up all the milk of humanity in one’s body as it has in yours ? ”

“ Why,” said Mr. Mingins, “ what do you mean ? ”

“ I mean this,” he replied, “ that here you have been living under my roof three days and three nights, knowing and believing all this, and yet you have never put your hand on my shoulder, or said one word to save me ! ”

I wonder how many more of us Christians may have such an indictment laid at our doors ? Of how many of us is it true that there is “ bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh ” who have yet to find the Saviour, and to whom we have yet to say the first word expressing interest in their condition ? And this says nothing about the wider circle of our friendship and acquaintance in business and society : nor the great fields, white unto the harvest, in heathen lands, where perhaps not even one dollar of our money has ever gone.

“ O, Christians, view the day
Of retribution ! Think how ye will hear
From your Redeemer's lips the fearful words :
‘ Thy brother perishing in his own blood
Thou sawest—thy brother hungered, was athirst,
Was naked, and thou sawest it. He was sick,
Thou didst withhold the healing ; was in prison
To vice and ignorance—nor didst thou send
To set him free ! ’ Oh, ere that hour of doom,
Whence there is no reprieve, brethren, awake
From this dark dream.”

VI

The Second Coming of Christ and the Doctrine of Rewards—An Exposition of Matthew 16 : 13-17 : 8

BEGINNING at verse 13, we read that Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, which was the farthest northern point reached in the course of His public ministry. He had now been engaged in that ministry for possibly a year and a half, and the time evidently had come when it was necessary to make a formal and definite proclamation of Himself as the Messiah of Israel.

He approaches it by saying to His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" By "men" He means Israelites other than His disciples. These had thought of Him only as a great prophet such as John the Baptist, or Elijah or Jeremiah. But not satisfied with this, He draws closer to the subject by inquiring, "Who say ye that I am?" Which elicits the wonderful confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Wonderful from several points of view, but especially in the scope of it. "The Christ" means the Messiah, the Anointed One

promised to Israel by all the prophets; but "the Son of the Living God" signifies His Deity, or equality with God.

No wonder that Jesus says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Dwell on this testimony to the supernatural in Peter's heart, enabling him to make that confession. It was not something he had conceived by his natural powers, but something which had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

Peter and his brother disciples had been with Jesus from the beginning. They had heard the wonderful words that had fallen from His lips; they had seen the wonderful works He had done; and had had an opportunity to study His wonderful life as none others had. And yet all this evidence, in itself, was not enough to enable them to perceive Him to be the Christ, the Son of the Living God. What a corroboration of the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God!" Argument is not what the natural man wants, nor education, nor evidence, but life. He must be born again or he cannot see the Kingdom of God, which means that without the regeneration of the Holy Spirit he cannot believe on Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. But thanks be to God, this is a case where a man may ask and receive. It still remains true, in other words, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Here is a deep mys-

tery, indeed, but the way is plain for any who will walk in it.

II

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (verse 21).

Why He waited until now to show this unto His disciples we do not know, but only that this is the first time He did reveal it. May it be that until now they had not been able to bear it? Not until they had openly confessed Him as the Son of the Living God were they prepared to receive so momentous a revelation. But how poorly prepared they were to receive it even now is seen in Peter's exclamation: “Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee,” or as the margin reads: “God have mercy on thee, Lord, this shall never be unto thee.”

Why did Peter say this? Was it because of his interest in Jesus only, or because also of his interest in himself and his fellow disciples? I think the latter, for remember that they were Jews, who were expecting the kingdom of Israel to be set up on the earth, and reigned over personally and visibly by the Messiah when He came. But was not Jesus the Messiah? Had not they confessed Him as such, and had not He accepted their confession and so confirmed it? Was He not going

up to Jerusalem? And, if so, was it not to wrest the government from the Romans and take it into His own hands? Others who had come before Him, false Messiahs, had attempted this and failed, but was He not to do the same, and succeed?

What then is it that He says about going up to Jerusalem to "suffer many things" of the leaders of the nation? They seemed to have ignored His words about rising again the third day. Were all their hopes and expectations to be thus dashed to the ground? They were still earthly men, and like most of their countrymen had overlooked the teachings of the prophets that the Messiah must come the first time as the suffering servant of God, and the second as the triumphant King. Supposing He had now come to triumph over His enemies and theirs, and finding such was not the case, how much did it mean of loss to them!

If, for example, He went up to Jerusalem and took the kingdom, who would be nearest to Him in the places of power and emolument? Who but those who had been the nearest in the time of His obscurity and retirement? And were not these His disciples? It was a question of worldly honour with them, not very remote from that in the politics of our own time, when the successful candidate is expected to reward those who have assisted in placing him in power.

Peter and his brethren cannot endure the disappointment. Is the Lord mentally unbalanced, is He out of His mind?

III

No wonder that under these circumstances He should turn and say unto Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" For this temptation was practically the same as that which Satan put before Him in the wilderness. Peter now, as Satan then, would have Jesus take the kingdom in some other way than the cross. It was not a suffering Messiah he was looking for, but a triumphant and victorious one. This furnishes the occasion for a discourse on the future reward of the saint, or losing one's life to find it.

Then said the Lord, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

When He says, "If any man will come after me" He means in the way these disciples were professing a desire to come after Him. And when He says, "Let him deny himself," the emphasis should be on "himself," not on "deny." Let him give himself to me by the surrender of his will, and take up his cross, not Christ's cross, but his own cross. Their cross in this case was that of disappointment concerning the setting up of the kingdom in their way and their time, and the patient waiting for the setting of it up in God's way and God's time.

He might have said, "Should I now fail to go to the cross in order to save my physical life, I would lose it." We all see how this would have been

true. Had he not obeyed the will of His Father and died as a sacrifice for sin, would He not have lost His life in a spiritual and eternal sense? And so His disciples, failing to do God's will in the same way, whatever that will might be, would lose their lives in the same sense.

On the other hand, the man who seems to have lost his life and to have put it out of the way, in the doing of God's will, will ultimately find that he has saved it forevermore. And the reason is that "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels and then shall he reward every man according to his works." In other words, it is the second coming of Christ that makes this sure. It were as though He said to Peter and the others, "Your expectations shall not be disappointed; your hopes shall not fall to the ground; they will be realized, and enjoyed to the utmost. Only the time for it all is not now. It is not associated with this, my first coming in humiliation, but with my second coming in glory."

IV

A tangible thing is this which Christ is promising His disciples, for as further encouraging them, He adds, "Verily, I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." What did He mean by that? We can imagine that the disciples asked the same question. There be some standing here that shall not die till they

have an ocular demonstration of the Son of man coming in His kingdom! What can it be? He permitted them to think about it for a week.

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart.

“And was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him” (17:1-3).

What is the significance of this? Is it not Christ's own interpretation and confirmation of His words, “There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom”? He takes three witnesses with Him that, according to the Jewish law, the testimony may be established, and He is “transfigured before them.”

In other words the transfiguration of Christ is the second coming of Christ in miniature as it were. When He comes the second time, He shall appear on the earth and yet He shall be apart from the earth in the air, and here we see Him in such relationship. When He comes the second time, it will be in glory, and here we see His face shining “as the sun,” His raiment “white as the light.” When He comes the second time, the dead saints shall be with Him, and here we see Moses, representative of that resurrection, talking with Him. When He comes the second time, the saints who are alive

and remain on the earth shall be caught up in the clouds to meet Him "in the air," and here we see Elijah, representative of that translation, also talking with Him. When He comes the second time, Israel in the flesh will sustain a mediatorial relationship to Him and the glorified Church on behalf of the other nations of the earth, and here we see Peter, James and John, representative of Israel in the flesh, occupying this place of wonderful privilege and fellowship.

Here appears the whole story of the second coming in a single picture, and yet it is all real. No wonder it brought such encouragement to the disappointed and wondering disciples. No wonder Jesus should have caused it to come to pass just at this time when the public confession of Himself had been made, and when it was needful to be confirmed beyond a peradventure.

Some years ago a remarkable mirage was witnessed over Lake Erie. There is on the shore of Canada, just opposite Cleveland, a town called Rondeau, at which point the lake is sixty miles wide. Very few of the people of Cleveland had ever seen that town, much less set foot within it. They may have observed its name in the railway guides, or upon the maps, but otherwise it was unknown to them. And yet for hours on this Sunday afternoon, by reason of the mirage, between two and three thousand of them had an opportunity to see it clearly. Its blocks of dwellings, its church spires, its streets, even the river running out into

the lake were all seen. Never could those citizens doubt that Rondeau was located opposite them, since on that day they had seen it with their eyes. And they had seen it not for themselves only, but for their fellow citizens, and for the later generations who should believe their testimony.

Something like this is the significance of the transfiguration of Christ on that memorable day. Peter, and James and John never could doubt or fail to understand the meaning of that promise, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." They had seen "the Son of man coming in his kingdom." And not only had they seen it for themselves but for you, and me and all the generations since you are wise enough to accept their testimony.

In evidence of this take what Peter himself says about it in his second epistle (1:15-18). He is addressing believers, to whom he desires, after his decease, to leave his testimony as a remembrance, and he says:

"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.

"For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

"And this voice which came from heaven we

heard, when we were with him in the holy mount."

After years of Bible study the importance of this passage grows upon one in its bearing on the future life of the believer. Peter had been preaching the gospel to these people by word of mouth, giving due proportion to "the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our Great God and Saviour Jesus Christ," which he assures them is not a fable cunningly devised, but based on the testimony of the senses of himself and others. The occasion he refers to is the transfiguration. Can anything be plainer? It is the case of the Lake Erie mirage except that that was simply atmospheric, while this was real. There they saw only, but here they heard and came into actual association with their surroundings. As we receive the testimony of Cleveland's citizens to the one, so are we bound to receive that of these witnesses to the other.

But here we have more than testimony to a fact, we have inspired comment upon the testimony. For the apostle says that the transfiguration was "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Therefore all the joy and encouragement it brought to the disciples at that time it may and ought to bring to us. We can have assurance almost to a demonstration that our Lord is coming again, and that He will bring His reward with Him.

What that reward is, in detail, is difficult to say. We only know that it includes our resurrection, our

glorification, and our likeness unto Christ Himself. But still there is something more. The reward is not passive but active. It is something to be received, but it is also something to be done. The parables of the "talents" and the "pounds" come into view, and with them a suggestion of service of eternal honour and delight.

This, then, is the significance of this discourse of Jesus on the future reward of the saint, or losing one's life to find it. When we remember that He is coming again, and is bringing His reward with Him, it is well worth our while to give up our lives in the sense intended, that we may find them in that day.

Dr. J. J. Van Oosterzee, in his commentary on this event, has some informing and uplifting observations which I quote in closing :

"We find here," he says, "a striking revelation of the future state :

"1. The spirits of just men made perfect live unto God, though centuries have already flown over their dust.

"2. In glorified bodies they are active for the concerns of the Kingdom of God, in which they take the holiest interest.

"3. Although separated by wide distances of time and space, they meet and recognize each other in higher regions.

"4. The centre of their fellowship is the suffering and glorified Son of Man.

"5. Their state is so blessed, that even their

transient appearance causes the greatest joy to the children of earth.

“6. Their earthly sorrow is compensated and forgotten; the Canaan Moses might not tread in life he sees unclosed to him centuries after death.

“Thus do these two men, Moses and Elijah, appear as types of that which saints are even now, in their separation from the body; and prophecies of that which they shall be in yet higher measure when the ‘Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father’ . . . and when ‘He shall reward every man according to his works.’”

O dear reader, have you yet received Jesus as your Saviour, and confessed Him as your Lord? And is this confession a real *life* confession, or is it merely the profession of your lips? Are you given up to Jesus? Is He the Master of your being? There are many motives persuading you to do this, but here is one linked up with the highest and eternal interests of your soul. This life is but a fleeting shadow; the things that remain are those that are to come. As you value them, as you value the very best which the Author of your being has in store for you, I beseech you to lose your life in the present time that you may find it forevermore.

PART II

Old Testament Themes

VII

The Witness of the Old Testament Prophets to the Coming Crisis

FIRST of all, what is the crisis? Its central feature, of course, is the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. But closely related thereto are other features which we proceed to name:

1. It involves the fact that the Jews will have returned to Jerusalem as yet in an unconverted state with reference to the Messiah, will have rebuilt their temple and be worshipping God, externally at least, after the manner of their fathers.

2. The Gentile nations, those of the Roman world, will have federated themselves under a single head, the antichrist, who will have entered into a covenant with the Jews for a period of seven years.

3. In the middle of this period that covenant will be broken by the antichrist, who at the head of the Roman nations aforementioned shall besiege Jerusalem and seek to overcome it.

4. This siege, which will be coincident with the time of Jacob's trouble such as he has never had before, shall be raised as the result of the appearing of Christ on behalf of Israel.

5. The antichrist shall at this time be destroyed, the Roman nations visited with judgment and the remnant of the Jews delivered.

6. This remnant of the Jews thus delivered shall constitute the nucleus of the Kingdom of Christ on this earth, with its capital at Jerusalem, and which shall ultimately include all the nations of the world.

The Church or the body of Christ shall have already been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. In other words, as stated in an earlier chapter, the second coming of Christ seems to be an event of more than one aspect. There is a coming for the saints to unite them to Himself in manifested glory, and a coming with the saints in the judgments on the living nations. The period between these two aspects, while doubtless brief, is not definitely revealed, but it is the latter of the two which is coincident with the crisis of which we speak. This crisis will close what we have come to call the present or church age and introduce the next, or millennial age.

II

After defining the crisis, it is next in order to explain what is intended by the witness of the Old Testament prophets concerning it.

Their prophecies really extend throughout the whole of the Old Testament. The consummation or crisis to which they point is included in the protevangelium, or the earliest recorded promise in

the Garden of Eden. Enoch prophesied of it before his translation. It is found in the original covenant with Abraham recorded by Moses. Moses himself touches upon it in Deuteronomy, and it is the only key to a large part of the book of Psalms, especially the imprecatory Psalms.

But there is a distinct body of writings in the Old Testament known as the Prophets, with which this chapter has especially to deal. These writings extend from Isaiah to Malachi, and began to be written about 800 and were concluded about 400 B. C. They speak in detail of this crisis, are a unit in their testimony concerning it, and cumulative in the evidence they present of its approach.

1. Chronologically considered, perhaps the earliest of these prophets is Amos, who prophesied in Israel about 800 B. C. and 100 years more or less before the Assyrian captivity. He warned the nation of Israel of that event, and closed his threatenings and appeals to them with these words:—words of hope and promise, saying :

“Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom (that is, upon Israel) and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth, saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For lo ! I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

“In that day (that is, the day when the sifting shall have been concluded) will I raise up the tabernacle

of David that is fallen and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old, that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

“Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed, and the mountains shall drop sweet wine and all the hills melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof. They shall also make gardens and eat the fruit thereof. And I will plant them upon their land and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God ” (9 : 8-15).

These words teach plainly that although Israel shall pass through a series of judgments, yet a remnant shall be spared, and that in this remnant the kingdom of David shall be restored. They teach also that the restoration of this kingdom will mean the submission of other nations to its governmental control after these other nations shall have passed through judgments of their own, and be reduced to a remnant also. They teach further that the restoration of this kingdom means the restoration of its people to their old land, and the restoration of the land itself to even more than its previous fertility and beauty, the restoration of its cities, and

the perpetuity of the possession and the blessing to the people for all time.

2. The next of the prophets of Israel and the last before the captivity is Hosea. God called upon him, after the manner of object teaching in the present day, to marry an unchaste woman as the symbol of his own alliance with a corrupt people.

This woman, notwithstanding the honour placed upon her and the fact that she had borne children to her husband, deserted him at a later period, going after her old lovers, symbolizing the ingratitude and idolatry of Israel who turned her back upon Jehovah notwithstanding His grace towards her.

Hosea, however, is directed to love this woman still, and to buy her back to him again, not indeed that for the time being they are to live together in the conjugal relation, but that she, to use the language of the prophet, shall not play the harlot, while he, as well, shall keep himself for her.

The explanation given is, that the children of Israel "shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince," and without their old time worship, till "afterwards they shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."

This harmonizes with Amos in every point at which the two prophets meet, and teaches, as he taught, that Israel, now scattered, is being kept for God, who is keeping Himself for her, in the sense

that He will not enter into the same relationship with any other nation, and that by and by, through repentance and faith, she shall be restored to her former place in the bosom of her husband, who is also her Maker.

III

3. Leaving the prophets of Israel, the earliest among those of Judah is Joel, who prophesied contemporaneously with Amos. He announces coming judgments upon Judah as Amos and Hosea did on Israel, but foresees redemption in the future when every enemy shall be overthrown, the land blessed and the Holy Spirit poured out upon the nation in wondrous power. It is by him that Jehovah says :

“For behold in those days and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I shall also gather all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land. . . . The sun and moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake, but the Lord will be the Hope of his people, and the Strength of the Children of Israel. . . . Then shall Jerusalem be holy. . . . Judah shall dwell forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.”

The added thought of Joel not found in the other

prophets is the picture of the coming judgments on the living Gentile nations. Here comes into view faintly at first, but to be more vividly presented in the prophecies that follow, the federation of the Roman Empire, under the leadership of the antichrist, besieging Jerusalem, and being overthrown through supernatural interference by the God of Israel.

4. Isaiah succeeds Joel, one of whose most thrilling prophecies relates the doom of Assyria (chapters 10-12). Assyria has been used of God in the prophet's time to chasten Judah, but her spirit is selfish, wicked, arrogant, God-defiant, and she is warned that her own hour of settlement shall come.

"When the Lord hath performed his whole work on Zion, he will punish the stout heart of the King of Assyria and the glory of his high looks. But in that day the remnant of Israel shall no more stay upon him that smote them," that is, upon Assyria or any Gentile power, "but upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel in truth."

That day, however, is seen to be the Messiah's day when "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse," upon whom the Spirit of the Lord shall rest, who shall "smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked, but shall judge the poor with righteousness."

It is the millennial day very evidently, for "the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the

lion shall eat straw like the ox," and "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all the holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." It shall be the day when Israel and Judah shall again be joined together, and when Jehovah shall do valiantly on their behalf "as in the day that they came out of the land of Egypt."

Of course, it is involved in the doom of Assyria either that she, as a nation, shall be revived in the last days, or that she stands as a type of the Gentile dominion at the time of the approaching crisis.

5. Jeremiah succeeds Isaiah, and prophesies in Judah until the time of her captivity by Babylon. It is his mission to reveal the supremacy of that Gentile power to whom in the will of God all the peoples of the earth, whether Jew or Gentile, must for the time being submit themselves.

Now begin the "times of the Gentiles," so-called, which continue from the period of Nebuchadnezzar to the end of the present age. During these "times" earthly dominion is taken out of the hands of Israel altogether, not to be returned to her again, as Jeremiah prophesies, until "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," until the approach of the crisis which we are now considering. Then a transfer is made again in connection with the judgments on the Gentile nations, and Israel shall reign, with the Messiah on the throne of David. See especially chapters 27 to 31, inclusive.

6. References to Ezekiel must be omitted, further

than to say that he was partly contemporaneous with Jeremiah, prophesying in captivity in Babylon, while the latter was prophesying in Judah. He practically covers the same ground as the other prophets, touching upon almost every point indicated in our opening outline of the crisis, but supplying details of that consummating period not found elsewhere.

IV

7. Daniel was the great prophet of the captivity. Unlike his predecessors and contemporaries, it was given him to reveal in detail the course of Gentile dominion during the "times of the Gentiles" from the period of Nebuchadnezzar till the coming of the Son of Man.

These "times" would be broken up into four periods coincident with the successive rules of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman Empires to the end of the present age.

The Roman Empire, which it is to be remembered is potentially in existence still, forming and controlling the character of the whole world, is, towards the end, to be divided into ten kingdoms, to be federated, as our prophet teaches, under one head—the little horn with "eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth speaking great things." The kingdoms over which he reigns are represented by a beast, terrible and "strong exceedingly," which is slain nevertheless, and his body given to the flames.

It is then that one like unto the Son of Man

comes in the clouds of heaven, and "there is given unto him dominion, and glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him." His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

At this time, as we are taught by the same prophet in the ninth chapter of his prophecy, the Jews are in Jerusalem, and in covenant with the antichrist—the little horn. He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, that is, for seven years. But in the midst of the week he shall violate its terms, he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease and upon the pinnacle of the temple shall he set up the idol of abomination, his own image doubtless, even until the consummation "when that determined shall be poured upon the desolator."

At that time Michael, the great prince, shall stand up for Israel," and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time." "At that time," says Jehovah to His beloved prophet, "Thy people shall be delivered and every one that shall be found written in the book."

V

8. This chapter will conclude with the testimony of Zechariah, who prophesied of the same things after the Babylonian captivity, thus forestalling any possible supposition that the preceding prophecies

found their fulfillment in the return of the Jews from that land.

In chapters 9 to 14 he gives a running forecast of Jewish history from the time of the Grecian conquest to the end of the present age, and as all the prophets ever hasten to the consummation, so he gives much more space to the culminating events in Jerusalem at the very end than to all the intervening ones.

The antichrist is seen, the foolish shepherd, the worthless shepherd who eats "the flesh of the flock and tears their hoofs in pieces." Jerusalem is being besieged, but God is making her "a cup of trembling to the peoples round about," to whose own lips they put that cup in other days. She is a burdensome stone for all peoples cutting them in pieces, God is seeking to destroy all the nations that have come against her, but upon her, that is, upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, He is pouring out "the Spirit of grace and supplication."

They at last are looking upon Him whom they pierced and mourning for Him as one mourneth for his only son. They are in bitterness for Him as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. A fountain is opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

The third part is being brought through the fire and refined as silver is refined, and tried as

gold is tried. They are calling upon the name of the Lord and He is hearing them. He is saying, "It is my people," and they are saying, "Jehovah is my God." "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." "And the Lord," saith the prophet, "shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord and his Name One . . . and it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. . . . In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses Holiness unto the Lord."

The prophets are a unit as to these things, and they shall come to pass, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

VIII

The Key to the Imprecatory Psalms

THE title of this chapter is suggested by an article in a Canadian journal dealing with the subject of the Psalms as war-time reading. The writer remarked that readers of the book of Psalms were discovering a new sense of oneness with its spirit. "Only six months ago," said he (*i. e.*, before the opening of the war with Germany), "many were discussing the 'imprecatory' or 'vindictive' Psalms and urging that they be omitted as unsuitable for Christian readers, but now such talk is little heard." The Fifty-fifth Psalm was cited as containing a strikingly exact representation of present-day facts. "Horror, impatience, the sense of a gross injustice, the aggravation of the situation by the fact of kinship with the enemy, the putting forth of the enemy's hand against such as were at peace with him, the profanation of a covenant, the heart set upon war—all these appear in this psalm with photographic exactitude," he went on to say, "and through it all is the assurance of the ultimate triumph of righteousness and the comfort of casting the burden upon the Lord. It is a psalm for daily reading in these times."

The editor of the journal in commenting on the

article said: "When the war is over, we believe many an Old Testament passage will have had fresh light shed upon it, and perhaps we shall understand, as never before, the statement of the psalmist that 'the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.'" "Perhaps," as a contemporary naïvely remarked, "we have in these words of the editor a hint at the kind of peace he would dictate at Berlin."

However that may be, the point is this: that just what Christians in Canada and Great Britain were saying about these Psalms, Christians in Germany and Austria were saying, and indeed in every other nation engaged in the terrific conflict. The comfort extracted by any one of them was the comfort extracted by all, which is one of the evidences of the divinity of the Psalms, and that which differentiates them from any other literature outside of the Bible. They meet the sorest need of men, all men and everywhere.

But after saying this, it remains that the Psalms (and we are now thinking of the "imprecatory" or "vindictive" Psalms) were not written especially for the comfort of any of the nations in the theatre of war, though of course in a secondary sense they are at liberty to so apply them. They were written for a people who long since ceased to be a nation, yet whose blood is moistening every battle-field.

Is this to say that these Psalms now rise up to curse that people? Has Israel—for of her we speak—forever lost her opportunity against her

enemies, and shall these imprecations, uttered by the Spirit of God, never be realized upon them? Is there no hour of triumph for the Jew over the Gentile? If so, hope for the earth has fled, for the only guarantee of lasting peace among the nations is bound up with the fulfillment of these cursings upon the enemies of Israel.

But this is not to say that Israel is so good, or so deserving of all this. Indeed, when all her holy privileges are considered, no more rebellious or ungrateful nation than she ever existed. But God has a purpose of redemption for the earth, in which Israel has a leading part, and one event essential to its execution is her reëstablishment in Palestine, and another the subjection of her Gentile enemies. The prophets in both the Old and New Testaments are a unit in their teaching as to this, as we saw in the preceding chapter, though we speak now only of the imprecatory Psalms.

II

Take the Ninth Psalm in illustration :

1. It opens with thanksgiving and exultation over the marvellous works of God (verses 1, 2).

2. But these works are the discomfiture of Israel's enemies, brought about by the execution of God's righteous judgments upon them, which judgments are associated with His "presence" (3, 4).

3. The enemies are the Gentile nations which, as such, are blotted out, come to an end, the very names of their cities having perished (5, 6, R. V.).

4. But the psalmist is a prophet, and is speaking of a time far distant from his day, a fact we are assured of because the Lord is seen sitting as King, judging the world in righteousness, comforting Israel, who is now putting her trust in Him because He has come to her deliverance (7-10).

5. A further evidence that such an age and such a condition are before us is in the eleventh verse, where the Lord is seen dwelling in Zion (Jerusalem) from which centre His doings are being declared among the peoples, *i. e.*, the Gentile nations of the earth.

6. Verses 13 and 14 are a plea on Israel's part for that day to come, because she is now in affliction, and at the very "gates of death." And the plea is accompanied by a pledge that in that day she will show forth His praise.

7. Faith rises at the thought, and the prophet sees the Gentile nations "sunk down in the pit that they made"; *i. e.*, the pit which they made for Israel is the one in which their own foot is taken, and as a result, God is made known by His judgments upon them (15, 16).

The conclusion of the Psalm is in the same vein, and the nations are to be made to know that they are but men.

To those who have given little attention to the subject, such an interpretation may seem unusual and strange. And yet the longer it is studied in the light of other prophecies, the more evident it will become that the key to the understanding of

these Psalms is the relation they bear to what the Bible calls "the day of the Lord," and which students of prophecy identify with a period known as the millennium.

III

Take the Second Psalm :

1. Jerusalem is in the foreground, and the Gentile nations are tumultuously assembling around her, but their plots will be in vain (verse 1).

2. That which they are plotting is the overthrow of the authority of God and His Son Jesus Christ, who is represented by Israel in Jerusalem.

3. But their plots and assembling will come to nought, and in spite of them God will set up His kingdom in the earth, and set His Son upon His holy hill of Zion (4-6).

4. The Son Himself speaks and declares the decree. God has promised Him the Gentile nations for His inheritance and they shall be His (7, 8).

5. They shall be His to rule while as yet they are unconverted and rebellious, for it is not the gentle persuasion of the Gospel that is set before us as the method of His rule, but crushing judgments, "the rod of iron," and dashing "them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (9).

6. In view of such a crisis, their kings and judges are exhorted to hearken to the voice of God; to serve Him, and to yield themselves to His Son, lest they "perish in the way, for his wrath will soon be kindled" (10-12).

The first three verses of this Psalm found an approximate fulfillment in the first rejection of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion at the hand of the Roman government (Acts 4:23-28), but that the Psalm as a whole awaits a completer fulfillment is scarcely admissible of a doubt.

The time of its complete fulfillment may be sooner than we think, but nevertheless it will eventuate in that experience of blessing for the whole earth for which creation groans.

Take the Sixty-seventh Psalm as an evidence of this: "God be merciful unto *us*, and bless *us*, and cause his face to shine upon *us*," says Israel (verse 1); and then His way shall "be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations" (2); the nations will "be glad and sing for joy" in that day, because God will "judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth" (4); yea, the earth shall then "yield her increase" as she will have never done before, because God, "even our own God shall bless *us* (Israel), and all the ends of the earth shall fear him" (6-7).

The imprecatory Psalms were written for Israel's comfort, though the Gentile nations (and all of us individually) may draw such comfort from them as is possible, for in some degree they are *applicable to all men when they turn from sin to God*. Nevertheless, the imprecations are to fall upon the Gentile nations in that day, when they shall be gathered against Israel once more returned to her own land. How soon that day may come we do not

know ; but this we know, that out of those judgments permanent blessing comes, for Israel's deliverance from the Gentile nations means the subjugation of those nations at last to Him who rules in equity and truth.

IV

"The Roman Empire in Prophecy," by W. E. Vine, M. A., contains an exposition of Psalm 29, which fits in so admirably with the foregoing that the liberty is taken to quote it at this point.

In that Psalm we find the scene of judgment on the federated nations under the leadership of the antichrist strikingly depicted. As the author says:

"The very length of the battle line is indicated, in agreement with the later and clearer description in Revelation 20 : 14. Indeed, the passages which foretell the events of this coming terrible day afford a remarkable illustration of the progressive character of the revelations of Scripture. The Psalm is divided into three parts :

"(1) The first three verses are a call to the saints in Heaven, the 'sons of the mighty,' to worship the Lord in view of the judgment He is just about to execute for the deliverance of His people the Jews, their land and their city.

"(2) The second part, verses 3-9, describes the actual judgment by means of 'the voice of the Lord.' The psalmist was doubtless thinking of a thunder-storm. The Spirit of God was giving prophetic utterance concerning a more terrible

scene, and the geographical limitations of the Psalm are of prophetic import. The first place mentioned is Lebanon, in the north, with its mountain spur Sirion (vs. 5, 6). The last place is the wilderness of Kadesh, in the south, the centre of which is Bozrah, in Edom (v. 8), a point of connection with Isaiah 63 : 1. Now the distance from Sirion to Bozrah, in the wilderness of Kadesh, is two hundred miles, and this is the sixteen hundred furlongs of Revelation 14 : 20. Here, then, in one fell stroke of divine wrath the Man of Sin and his forces are overthrown, and the Jews are delivered. The later revelations of Scripture thus enable us to pass from the natural and physical setting of the Psalm to the veiled reality. Thus this portion of the Psalm is to be read in connection with the passage from Revelation 19, quoted above.

“(3) The last two verses describe the results of the conquest. The Jews in their extremity were threatened with annihilation. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. The people now see their Deliverer in person, they ‘look on Him whom they pierced.’ They realize that their enemies were destroyed because ‘the Lord sat as King at the flood.’ And now ‘the Lord sitteth as King forever.’ He whose right it is to reign has come to Zion. Hence the psalmist can next say : ‘The Lord will give strength unto His people ; the Lord will bless His people with peace.’ Armageddon is over, the winepress of God's wrath has been trodden, and the war against the Lamb is ended.

“Psalm 30 follows on with the people’s song of praise for deliverance.”

V

Before concluding this chapter it may be well to refer again to what was said about God’s using Israel as an instrument of redemption. The failure to apprehend this not only denies us the key to the imprecatory Psalms, but to many other important parts of Scripture, to say nothing about an understanding of the awful times in which we are now living.

God’s purpose in Israel, as stated in an earlier chapter, is threefold: (1) that she might be a repository for His truth in the earth; (2) a channel for the incoming of the Redeemer; and (3) a national witness to Him before all the other nations.

She has fulfilled the first two of these purposes, but failed in the last. And her failure here accounts for her own dispersion among those nations, and all the suffering she has endured and is still enduring at their hands. Moreover, so far as those nations are concerned, it is her failure as a witness to Jehovah that accounts for their disobedience to and separation from Him to-day.

God’s purposes, however, do not change; and if we understand His Word aright, Israel must be restored again to her own land, and take up that witness to Him which she has hitherto refused.

It is the case of Jonah and Nineveh over again on a larger scale. It is after she has returned, and

before her witness is begun, that the nations once more shall seek to enrich themselves at her expense. Twice hitherto have they besieged her capital, under Nebuchadnezzar and under Titus, and each time to her discomfiture. However, the third time it shall not be so, for "so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion and for the hill thereof" (Isa. 31 : 4).

It is at this crisis, if our interpretation be correct, that the imprecatory Psalms find their complete fulfillment, and for that day the peace of the earth still waits.

IX

The Dream of History, or is the World Growing Better or Worse?—An Exposition of Daniel 2 : 31-45

IS the world growing better, or worse? is a question no man of himself can answer. The sweep of its horizon is too vast, its data are too many and complex for the finite mind.

Not long ago a lecturer narrated ten events occurring within the last decade as an evidence that the world was growing better. But one might have narrated ten upon the other side. As a matter of fact, the forces of good and evil are rapidly developing side by side in our day. Side by side they are reaching towards a goal of some kind, but what it is, only God can tell.

But God *has* told us again and again, both in the Old Testament and in the New. He has not left us in doubt about it. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and if we fear Him in the sense that we read His Word, and meditate upon it, and believe it, we shall not be left in darkness concerning this or any other matter needful for us to know.

He has set before us the truth concerning the issue of good and evil in this age, in this "dream

of history," as it has been called, which He revealed to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, six hundred years before Christ.

To appreciate it one needs to know certain preliminary facts ; for example, that God has purposed the redemption of this world, a purpose He will certainly fulfill. And in its redemption He has chosen to use two instruments. One is His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, on whom He hath laid "the iniquity of us all," and "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." The other, the nation of Israel, chosen from all the other nations or families of the earth for the three purposes previously mentioned.

Israel has fulfilled the first two of these purposes. She has preserved the sacred oracles of the Old Testament, and given the Saviour to the world, although she crucified Him when He came. The third of these purposes she has not fulfilled. She has never borne a true and faithful witness to Jehovah before the nations, and the result is, on the part of the nations, that God is still unacknowledged by them ; and on the part of Israel, that God has cast her among the nations as a chastisement for her iniquity, where she is being "sifted as corn is sifted in a sieve."

But it is God's purpose—and, as we have seen, the prophets are a unit in saying it,—that at the end of this age Israel will return to her land again, and, repentant, and believing on the Lord Jesus as her Messiah, shall once more take up the witness

for God which she failed to bear in her earlier history, and through that witness the nations shall be brought to Him and to His Son, our Saviour.

But in the meantime, as chastising Israel for her iniquity, God has taken out of her hands the dominion which He promised her on the ground of her obedience, and transferred it, for the time being, into the hands of the Gentiles. He chose to do this at the period just referred to, about six hundred years before Christ, when Nebuchadnezzar was king of Babylon, and Israel had been taken captive there. It is of this particular crisis in Israel's history and that of the Gentile powers that we read in Daniel 2: 31-35:

“Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.”

Daniel is here addressing Nebuchadnezzar and

revealing to him, at the divine command, the dream he had forgotten and the interpretation of it.

This colossal image represented the Gentile dominion of the world, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the end of this age, when Christ shall come again to set up His kingdom upon the earth. Further, it represents this dominion as divided into four world-empires: the Babylonian symbolized by the head of gold; the Medo-Persian by the breast and arms of silver; the Grecian, by the belly and sides of brass; and the Roman, by the legs of iron and the feet, part of iron and part of clay.

Still further, when the dominion is in the hands of the Romans, that empire shall be divided into ten kingdoms, having in them the strength of the iron and the brittleness of the clay; or, in other words, the power of the monarchy and the weakness of the democracy. And at the time when the Roman Empire is thus divided Christ, represented by the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, shall come to set up His kingdom.

This shall mean a mighty collision between light and darkness, between heaven and hell as represented by Gentile dominion on the earth, and then shall that dominion come to an end. The details are in verses 36 to 39, inclusive:

“This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength,

and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth."

When God says to the king of Babylon that He has given him a kingdom, and power, and strength, and glory, we are not to suppose He did it because of the worthiness of the king, or because he was in fellowship with God, or desired consciously to serve Him. God's motives were, first, a punishment of Israel, and, second, a demonstration that the Gentiles, no more than Israel, are able to govern this world without Him, as the history of the years has proved.

When it is said, furthermore, that "after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee," the reference being to that of the Medes and Persians, we are not to suppose that its inferiority meant that it had less military power or territorial expansion. The opposite was true. Its military power was greater, and its territory more expanded, for it included that of Babylon and its own. It was inferior, however, in the character of its government. It was a limited monarchy, while the government of Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarchy. In the mind of God, the ideal government is not a democracy, but an absolute monarchy, only the monarch must be holy and righteous,

knowing and doing the will of God. The only monarch rising to such a standard is the Son of God.

When God says, "another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth," He is referring to the Grecian kingdom, which followed that of the Medes and Persians, and was inferior thereto as brass is inferior to silver. Inferior in the character of its government, as in the other case, for on the death of Alexander the Great the control of the Grecian Empire was divided among four.

We now come to the most critical feature of the prophecy, that concerning the last empire, verses 40 to 43 :

"And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise, and whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

This is the Roman Empire which extended from

Turkey in Asia on the east to the British Isles on the west, including all the nations skirting the Mediterranean Sea,—Spain, Portugal, France, part of Austria and Hungary, and Greece on the north; and Egypt and Africa on the south.

These were the nations included in the Roman Empire, and which constitute the sphere of this prophecy. Not the United States, except as she may be in alliance with these nations, and not the heathen nations, so-called, but only these that have been named. Into their hands God committed the dominion of the earth, and there it still remains.

The prophet teaches that by and by Gentile dominion, as represented in this empire, shall be broken up into ten kingdoms. It is difficult to point out these kingdoms now, but doubtless a new alignment will be made ere long, so that the ten may easily be identified. However, the prophecy declares the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken, partly monarchical and partly democratic.

At the time, however, when the Roman Empire is thus divided, God's hour shall come and the kingdom of His Son. We read about it in verses 44 and 45 :

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut

out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

This is plain. "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom." We learn from a later prophecy of Daniel that the ten kingdoms, towards the close of this age, will become confederated. They will join themselves under a single head referred to in the New Testament as "the man of sin" and "the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2). And it is when he is at the head of this confederation, blaspheming God and persecuting His saints, especially in Jerusalem, that "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry," and destroy that wicked one by "the brightness of his coming," and "slay him with the breath of his mouth." In the destruction of the head of this confederation will come the destruction of the nations themselves, until "They shall become as the chaff upon the summer threshing-floor."

Is the world growing better, or worse? The foregoing is the answer of the Old Testament.

II

Look now at the answer in the New Testament, 2 Timothy 3:1-5:

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their

own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof : from such turn away."

It may be said that such a picture as this has been true of the world in all the centuries. Granted, but those who maintain that the world is growing better, and who are expecting a millennium before Jesus comes, should be able to prove that in the end of this age we shall have no such grievous times, but good times. If a millennium is coming before Jesus comes, this is not the picture of the end of the age we should expect ; but if no millennium can come until He comes to introduce it and make it a possibility, then just such a condition is what we should expect. Is not this indeed a picture of the present time ? Are not events confirming the truth of the Word of God, and giving us an answer to the question as to whether the world is growing better, or worse ?

Remember that when Paul says : "In the last days perilous times shall come," he is not referring to the last days of the world, but the last days of this age. Although the world is thousands of years old, there have been many ages in it or dispensations when God has been dealing with His people and with the world on different plans.

108 Prophecy and the Lord's Return

There was the Edenic age, when He dealt with our first parents in Eden, and which age ended in a catastrophe. They were driven out of Eden. Then came the antediluvian age also ending in catastrophe, for the race was swept off the earth, with the exception of eight souls. Then the Mosaic age, which also ended in a catastrophe, since it crucified the Saviour of the world, for which Israel is scattered among all the nations of the earth until now. We are now in the Christian, or church age, when God is exemplifying still another plan. This, too, will end in a catastrophe, for when the Church, the body of Christ, shall have been caught up to meet her Head in the air, he will come with his Church and with his holy angels, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel.

And remember that the nations upon which vengeance shall fall are not those of heathendom, Japan, China and Africa, for example, but those that circle the Mediterranean, the nations of Christendom, which, while professing a form of godliness, deny its power. That is the story God sets before us, and the answer He gives as to whether the world is growing better or worse.

Christendom is one thing, and the Church of Christ another. The true Church of Christ is the body of Christ; but there is a false church, not merely the Roman Catholic, as some may be quick to say, but the Protestant Church as well, for there is as awful apostasy in Protestantism as in Roman

Catholicism. This is the Christendom with which God shall have a controversy in that day, and which shall be ground as "chaff upon the summer threshing-floor."

In the light of this, what is our responsibility? What is the lesson God would teach us? A lesson of separation from the world. We cannot absolutely separate ourselves from its society, its literature, its politics, its commerce, but we can separate ourselves from its methods, its spirit, and its aims.

The world conceives of humanity as a rising race, and says we are getting better all the time. But God teaches us that we are a fallen and a falling race, and, like the sheep of the parable, not only going astray from God, but farther and farther astray. The world conceives that the remedy for its needs is education, and schools, colleges, and universities are multiplied. But God teaches us that the remedy is regeneration, and that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The world's conception of the ideal is summed up in that talismanic word "civilization." But God teaches us that the only ideal which can stand the test of His presence is represented in the word "transformation," after the likeness of His Son.

When we take sides with God, and begin to think God's thoughts after Him concerning the condition of our race, the remedy for it, and its ideals, then we shall have separated ourselves from the world, and the results in our character and conduct will soon be seen.

The Last World-Monarchy

1. *THE definition of the term.* By the "World-Monarchy" is meant a federation of the nations of the Roman Empire under a single head as in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Alexander or the Cæsars. By the "*last*" world-monarchy, that which the earth shall see as the culmination of the present age and the forerunner of millennial peace.

2. *The head of this world-monarchy.* The Scriptures speak of him prophetically and figuratively as the "little horn," "the abomination of desolation" (Daniel); "the man of sin," "the lawless one," "the son of perdition" (Paul); "the antichrist," "the beast" (John). A secular rather than an ecclesiastic despot he would seem to be, although he has an ecclesiastic in close relation to him under the figure of the "second beast" of Revelation 13, and the "false prophet" of Revelation 19. Into his hand for the time being Satan will commit his power and authority in the earth.

The Scriptures teach further that he will arise out of the Roman Empire, and doubtless that part of it formerly known as the Grecian Empire. Possibly we should look for him in the locality of the Balkans.

When he first appears he will be comparatively weak and insignificant considered as a prince or king, the head of a small principality doubtless, but his development will be rapid. By fraud and flattery, superadded to a Satanic astuteness, he will swiftly gain control of three kingdoms; and at last, the other seven will find it to their advantage to yield their dominion into his hands, when for the time being he will have become supreme.

3. *The location or seat of government.* This seems to be identical with that of the first world-monarchy, viz: Babylon, in the land of Shinar.

This is denied by some, among other reasons, on the ground of Isaiah 13 : 19-22 :

“And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there ; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces : and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”

This, they say, was fulfilled in the overthrow of Babylon by the Persian power hundreds of years before Christ. But possibly, what befell Babylon

in that day may bear about the same relation to what will befall it in the day to come as a shadow bears to the substance it precedes.

Benjamin Wills Newton in his "Babylon and Egypt" says: "God is wont in His goodness to give premonitory blows. He is accustomed to warn before He finally destroys. Egypt, Jerusalem, and many other places, have all experienced premonitory desolations ; and so has Babylon. Its present ruin is a memorial of what God's righteous vengeance can do, and a warning of what it will more terribly do, if human pride in contempt of all His admonitions shall again attempt to rear its goodly palaces where He has written desolation.

"Without therefore undervaluing the lesson given by past visitations of God's judgments, without hiding, but rather seeking to proclaim the reality and extent of the ruin His holy hand has wrought, we have also to testify that the hand of man uncommissioned from above will, sooner or later, reconstruct the fabric of its greatness, its last evil greatness, on the very plains which teem with the memorials of a ruin entailed by former and yet unrepented of transgressions.

"Egypt, Damascus, Palestine, and, in a measure, Jerusalem, are already being revived. And if these and neighbouring countries, which have been visited by inflictions similar to those which have fallen on Babylon, are yet to revive and flourish with an evil prosperity at the time of the end, why should Babylon be made an exception ?"

Indeed, to quote him further—"That the blow which has already fallen upon Babylon should be regarded as premonitory only, so far from being inconsistent with the method of the divine acting in other cases, is on the contrary in strict harmony with it. And so strongly do present facts, as well as events known from Scripture as about to occur in the land of Israel, indicate the likelihood of Babylon's restoration, that, even if Scripture were silent respecting its final history, we should nevertheless conclude that its revival was not only antecedentary probable, but well-nigh certain."

In proof of this, the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Isaiah should be read continuously, at least until the end of verse 27 of the last-named chapter. The thirteenth dwells on the glory and fall of Babylon the city, but the fourteenth dwells principally upon the glory and downfall of Babylon's king.

"Will any one read the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah as a whole and say it has been fulfilled? Has he yet appeared among the nations who is there styled Lucifer, the day-star? Has there been as yet any one who, after arrogating to himself the place of Christ and professing to be to the nations as the bright and morning star, has been because of this blasphemy smitten and brought down to Hades, to the sides of the pit? No such king of Babylon has as yet existed, and no such has been destroyed."

Moreover, it is very clear from these chapters

that the destruction of this king shall be coincident with the forgiveness of Israel, for at the beginning of the fourteenth chapter we read :

“ For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land : and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place : and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids : and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were ; and they shall rule over their oppressors.”

There is more in these chapters which goes to prove that the hour of this judgment on Babylon is still future. These things have not yet come to pass in the history of Jacob and Israel. God has not yet set them in their own land. The people have not yet taken them and brought them to their place, and Israel does not possess the peoples of the earth for servants and for handmaids. She has not yet taken them captives whose captive she was, nor does she yet rule over her oppressors.

Other arguments might be presented, but these are sufficient to show that the prophecy of Babylon's destruction is yet to be fulfilled. And this involves, of course, the restoration of that city to her former place as the centre of the federation of the God-defying nations of the earth.

4. *The reason for the last world-monarchy.*
This might be expressed in one phrase almost, that

which is so familiar in twentieth century conversation, "trade and commerce."

The prophet Zechariah, in the vision of the woman in the ephah (chap. 5), seems to indicate a revival of commerce on the plain of Shinar in the end period, and tokens all around us strengthen conviction in that direction.

This awful war was begun in the desire of the chief national aggressor to extend her commerce; and it will be settled finally on a commercial basis. The near and the far east is the prize that most of the European nations are contending for, and "the glory of the Chaldees" is coming to the fore again.

This is the day of the syndicate, the corporation and the trust. It is also the day of the federation and the union. Men of capital are coming together and so are working-men. Organization is not only national, but international, and trade and commerce in some aspect is the secret of it all.

But the day is coming when the world will see its greatest syndicate, its greatest corporation, its greatest union. And this will be when the nations of the Roman Empire come together again, and for the sake of their material well-being put into the hands of the superman of whom the German Nietzsche spake so much, the combination of their power:

In corroboration of this observe that in the book of Revelation (chap. 18), when the seer speaks of the destruction of Babylon, he sets before us the

merchants and the shipmasters of the earth as the chief mourners at her funeral :

“ And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power ; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the *merchants* of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. . . . And the *merchants* of the earth shall weep and mourn over her ; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more.”

Then he describes in detail the character of their merchandise, which is that of luxury rather than necessity, and returning to the destruction of the city, says :

“ The *merchants* of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls ! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every *shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea*, stood afar off, and cried when they saw the smoke of her

burning, saying, 'What city is like unto this great city!'"

5. *The occasion of her downfall.* Why is this great city brought to nought? Why does this last world-monarchy come to an end?

In considering it we are brought back to the twelfth chapter of Genesis and God's promise to give to Abraham and posterity the land of Palestine forever.

In fulfillment of that promise the Jew is going back to Palestine; at first in an unconverted state, so far as his acceptance of Jesus as his Messiah is concerned. When Israel thus goes back, she will rebuild her Temple, and essay to worship the God of her fathers.

But when this federation of the nations takes place, Palestine is absolutely necessary to it, for she is the key to the Orient. Israel thus will be approached by the head of this federation, "the man of sin" who will make a covenant with her for seven years, in which he will grant her liberty to worship God.

There will be faithful Jews in Jerusalem at that time who will not thus be ensnared, nor enter into this "covenant with death and this agreement with hell." But the majority, as in that earlier time when they crucified our Lord, will win the day and the covenant will be sealed.

In the midst of the seven years, however, in accordance with his character of deceit and fraud, he will break the covenant, and setting up his own

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image in the Temple to be worshipped, shall give out that he himself is God. And practically the whole of Christendom in that day, including faithless Israel, will do obeisance to him. This is the teaching both of Daniel and of Paul.

His hour of triumph, however, is not long, for now is fulfilled the words of Zechariah (chapter 14).

“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; . . . Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, . . . and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”

Then is the hour of the triumph of the Son of God, for we read again :

“And the Lord shall be king over all the earth : in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. . . . Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.”

Then it is that Israel takes up the broken threads of privilege and duty where she laid them down so long ago, the threads of testimony and witness to Jehovah, her Messiah, and her Saviour as well as ours. And then it is that through her testimony the nations of the earth, in the millennial age, shall be brought at last into obedience to the Son of God.

A question possibly arises : “What about the

Church in that day? We thought the hope of the Christian was the coming of the Lord. But if He is not to come until all these things intervene,—the federation of the nations, the development of the man of sin, the restoration of the Jew to his own land—how long must it be before He comes?”

The answer has been indicated more than once in these pages. There is a coming of Christ *for* His saints, and a coming *with* His saints. It is the coming of Christ *for* His saints that is the hope of the Church, and for which the faithful are always looking.

There is nothing to intervene before He comes. He may come to-day, or within our generation, when the Church will be caught up to meet Him in the air. Then there will be an interval, how long is not revealed, but during that interval most of these events will transpire on the earth.

And then the crisis comes, and Christ comes, *with* His Church and with His holy angels, “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1 : 8).

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